

STUDENT LEADER GUIDE



HOLIDAY ISSUES: EASTER EDITION

EASTER STORY

WELCOME & OPEN PRAYER

[Host] Welcome to First Priority. We are really glad you're here. Today [insert name] is going to talk about something way more powerful than chocolate bunnies or egg hunts — it's the real story of Easter, and honestly, it's the greatest rescue mission in history. Before we begin, let's take a second to pray and ask God to speak to us today. Let's pray.

Sample prayer: God, thank You for bringing each of us here today. Be with [insert name] as they talk about the Easter story. Help this not to be just another message but a reminder of what You did and why it matters. In Jesus' name, amen.

THE EASTER STORY

[Speaker] What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word Easter? (Allow students to respond and share your own too.) Some people think of candy, spring break, or family dinner. But today we're going to talk about what actually happened on the day Jesus died for you and me. It's not an easy story to hear, but it's one we all need to hear, because it's the reason we have hope and the promise of Heaven.

Let's zoom in on three simple but heavy words: **"THEY CRUCIFIED HIM."** We read that in Luke chapter 23 verse 33. At first, it sounds simple. But don't let how short that sentence is take away how deep it really goes.

THEY — Who were "they"? The Roman soldiers? The religious leaders? Yes, but in a deeper way, it was also you and me. It was our sin, our pride, our lies, our anger, our rebellion that put Jesus on that cross. We're not just reading a story from 2,000 years ago. We're a part of it.

CRUCIFIED — In Jesus' time, crucifixion was the most brutal and painful way to die. And Jesus endured all of it. Let's imagine what that meant:

He's exhausted, beaten, and bloody. They lay Him down on a wooden cross, stretch out His arms, and drive large nails through His wrists. Then they raise the cross upright. His feet are nailed in too.

To breathe, He must push up on the nail through His feet. Every movement hurts. His muscles cramp. He's suffocating. And yet — He stays there. On purpose, for you and me.

For hours, Jesus suffered like that. Until finally, He gave up His life and said, *"It is finished."* Why? Because He loves us more than we could ever understand.

HIM — Jesus. He's not just a good guy. He's not just a teacher. He is God in human flesh. The One who healed the sick, opened blind eyes, and lived a life without sin. The Savior. He could have stopped it all; but instead, He chose the cross so He wouldn't have to live forever without us. Yes, we crucified Him. But the story doesn't end there.

HE IS RISEN! — That's the game-changer. *"He is not here, for he has risen, as he said."* This is what it tells us in Matthew chapter 28 verse 6. Jesus didn't stay in the grave. He rose from the dead, showing us that sin, death, and hell don't get the final word. He does.

When Jesus walked out of His own grave, it meant our guilt, our shame, and our sin stayed buried. Forever. That's what Easter is all about. A new life, freedom, and forgiveness for anyone who chooses to follow Him.

So, what does that mean for us? It means we're not stuck in our past. It means we can have peace with God, purpose in this life, and the promise of Heaven. If you've never made the decision to follow Jesus, you can today. You don't have to be perfect. You just need to believe and trust Him. Talk to one of us, whether it's a

student leader or an adult. We would love to help you start a relationship with Him.

If you do know Jesus, don't keep this story to yourself. Share it. Live it. Invite someone to church this Easter. Ask God to give you the courage to speak up and love people boldly.

GOSPEL TOOL: eFOLD

[Speaker] Now we're going to walk through a simple tool that helps explain the Easter story and the Gospel using the eFOLD. (Have student leaders pass out one eFOLD per student. Guide students as you go.)

1. (Front of the card)

- o On the right is God, perfect and holy.
- o On the left is us, separated from Him because of our sin.

It tells us this in Romans chapter 3 verse 23, *"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*

2. (Jesus on the cross)

- o God loved us so much that He sent His Son, Jesus, to take our punishment.

It tells us in Romans chapter 5 verse 8, *"But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."*

3. (The tomb and resurrection)

- o Jesus was buried, and the tomb was sealed. But He didn't stay dead.

It tells us this in Matthew chapter 28 verses 2 and 6, *"An angel of the Lord descended... and rolled back the stone." "He is not here, for he has risen!"*

4. (Cross bridge)

- o The cross becomes the bridge that connects us back to God.

It tells us in John chapter 14 verse 6, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

5. (Holding hands)

- o This picture reminds us of the relationship Jesus offers us.

It tells us in John chapter 3 verse 16, *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life."*

Knowing all of this isn't enough; you have to choose to follow Him. What will you do with what you've heard? This is the moment that you allow the person you just shared the eFOLD with an opportunity to respond.

Take a few minutes to practice sharing the eFOLD with someone around you. You don't need to memorize all the verses, just talk through the pictures in your own words. Make it personal. Make it real. Ready, set, go! (Have the student host come back up and give the CHALLENGE and PRAY.)

CHALLENGE AND PRAY

[Host] Our challenge for this Easter is to not just remember the story, live it. Share the eFOLD. Invite someone to church. Tell a friend what Jesus means to you. He is risen and that's news too good to keep quiet. Let's pray.

Sample prayer: Jesus, thank You for the cross. Thank You for loving us enough to die in our place. Thank You for rising again so we could live. Help us not to take this lightly. Give us boldness to share this story with others and live like we believe it. In Your name, amen.

GAME TIME – Optional

[Host & Mentor] (See the Game Time tab for options.)